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The Virtuous Cycle of Health-Wellness Employee Practices That Saves Tasty Catering Money

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In Winning Workplaces' Top Small Company Workplaces award application, we ask small businesses whether they engage employees as part of a wellness and fitness program and, if yes, to tell us about how this program works in their organization.

Tasty Catering, a Chicago area provider of corporate catering solutions that's one of our just-announced winners of this award for 2010, provides such a program. I thought their essay on how this program works was great because it shows how the 54-employee firm has created a virtuous cycle that is good for employees and, at the same time, good for the business.

Here it is:

All full time staff are entitled to company paid health club membership at the local fitness center. They must attend 26 times a quarter (twice a week) or pay \$5 for each time missed. This encourages use and fitness. TC also has a consultant who is a registered/licensed dietician and designs healthy menu programs for staff and for clients. Free meals are provided to staff every day. These meals include salads, fresh fruits, lean proteins and other such healthy foods. Each meal has a heart healthy, vegetarian and vegan offering. After work sports teams which contain a majority of Tasty Catering staff are sponsored by the company. These aforementioned programs have led to healthier staff and lower priced insurance premiums. Insurance are paid at 33% because the majority of the staff have insurance policies provided by their significant others. The savings from having to contribute a larger portion of insurance for a few staff has allowed the company to spend more money for all staff in the form of health club membership, healthy meals and sports sponsorships.

Do you see what's going on here? In brief:

- The company makes an initial investment in a set of health- and wellness-themed employee engagement best practices.
- Healthier staff as a result of these practices are less dependent on the features of a typical medical insurance plan, which lowers future company premiums.
- Some companies might add the savings to their cash reserves, or invest it in some other part of the business, so it's beneficial no matter what. In Tasty Catering's case, they reinvest it in the same area so they can encourage even better participation in health/wellness initiatives – which further lowers medical insurance premiums.

As with all of our award winners for 2010 – and our past honorees, for that matter – this cycle implies open and honest communications team building. How else could the company get a sense of how many of their staff are covered by significant others' plans, for leadership to know how they should renew with their provider for direct employee coverage?

Related: This post shares 16 common features of wellness programs as used by three-fourths of the winners and finalists of our 2010 small business award.

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